

Make Your Own Neolithic Jomon Jar

Grades K - 12

Objectives

After completing the activity, students will be able to:

- Work with clay
- Create a clay pot that is both decorative and functional
- Make the connection between art and household objects
- Gain insight into the needs and creation processes of the Neolithic era

Discussion/Motivation

**Watch video on Jomon vessel*

During the Jomon period, artisans made many pots and jars that were used primarily for storing food. Although we are not entirely sure how this vessel would have been stored (either in the ground or hung), we do know that additional attention was paid to decorating these objects. Artisans would roll clay into log cords, then form a coil with the cords to build the body of the jar. They would then smooth out the clay and add decoration by rolling a rope over the wet clay.

Q: Why do you think they added decoration to this everyday jar?

Materials

- Clay (an earth color), or a self-drying clay like Mexican pottery clay or Crayola Model Magic (no need for a kiln with self drying clays)
- Pencil
- Paper
- Smoothing tool (wooden or plastic spoons)
- Trimming tool (plastic knife)
- Sponges
- Water
- Decorating tools: rope, plastic forks, buttons, etc.
- Kiln (optional)

Procedure

1. Draw a jar the size and shape you would like the students to aim for
2. Allow students to draw their own jar they would like to make
3. Prepare the clay by gently forming it into a cube to get the air bubbles out
4. Roll out coils (long cords) about $\frac{1}{3}$ " thick, then use water to join them into longer cords
5. Begin coiling the cords to create the outside of the jar
6. Smooth the inside and outside of the jar until the coils are no longer visible
7. Decorate the jar by rolling a rope across the exterior or using other decorating tools
8. Fire the jar in a kiln (optional)

Evaluation

Have the students say or write a description about the jar and what they would like to use it for.